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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5421
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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1554
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 4331
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 3548
RUEHNEH/AMCONSUL HYDERABAD 0286
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1947
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 5803
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 2395
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 9333
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PAKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN; NEW DELHI.

This countrywide cable reports on relevant media reaction/opinion from India's large non-English press. The Mission reports on English-language media via email through the daily "Early Edition" summary.

PAKISTAN

1. "TALIBAN'S TRUCE WITH THE DEMON PAKISTAN" editorial in the February 18, 2009, Mumbai edition of centrist Marathi daily SAKAAL. "The Pakistani government's handshake with the Taliban is the worst piece of news for India and the global community. Pakistan's President Asif Zardari had earlier expressed complete helplessness in the face of Pakistani Taliban extremism that has engulfed his country. But a formal agreement with the Taliban now marks nothing less than a "military surrender." Some political commentators suggest it could be a tactical retreat. But many in India and the rest of the world perceive this treaty as Pakistan's inability to go after Baitullah Mehsud's Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Waziristan without conceding ground in Malakand. The truce is supposed to end the violence in Pakistan, but one cannot expect any such positive outcome from a treaty between two extremist elements."

2. "PAKISTAN COMPROMISES WITH HARDCORE FUNDAMENTALISTS," editorial in the February 18 pro-BJP Kolkata Bengali BARTAMAN. "Ultimately, India's concerns were proved to be true. The Pakistani government has surrendered to

hardcore fundamentalist pressure. Naturally, President Obama's Special Envoy Holbrook is also worried. India will have to remain more cautious and prepared to deal with any exigencies. It is not going to a war, but India needs to properly defend itself."

AFGHANISTAN

¶3. "THE TALIBAN CRISIS," editorial in the February 18 independent Kolkata Bengali ANANDABAZAR PATRIKA. "At this moment, one of the biggest concerns for New Delhi happens to be the Taliban in Pakistan... the Pakistan government must be aware that the peace pact is merely temporary and the Taliban will not move an inch from its ideology and methodology. It is not only dangerous for Pakistan alone but also for neighboring countries that the government, committed to lead its people to the liberation of democracy, finally abandoned the majority of people to the control of the rigorous Talibani Shariat law. It is not hard to understand that President Zardari has been caught between Islamic fundamentalist pressure on Islamabad and heat from the Pakistani army, and is not in a position to make any independent decision. The Taliban will seek to destroy Indian democracy. So New Delhi must increase its pressure immediately on Islamabad. The dimension of the danger warrants a combined U.S.-India-Pakistan effort to combat the problem."

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